

REMARKS

The present Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed September 13, 2006, in the above-identified application.

In the present Amendment, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of claim 4 therein, and independent claim 11 to incorporate the limitations of claim 12 therein. Claim 19 has also been amended so that it differs in scope from claim 17 of U.S. Patent 6,669,730.

In the Office Action, the Examiner noted that the priority claim did not include a specific reference to the earliest non-provisional application in the chain. In response, Applicants have amended paragraph [0001] to note that U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/968,046 is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/789,936, filed February 15, 2001.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 19 under 35 U.S.C § 101 as claiming the same invention as that of claim 17 of prior U.S. Patent No. 6,669,730. In response, Applicants have amended claim 19 as indicated above so that claim 19 is no longer co-extensive with claim 17 of prior U.S. Patent No. 6,669,730. In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request that the statutory type double patenting rejection be removed.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-18 on the ground of non-statutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-16 of U.S. Patent No. 6,669,730. The Examiner also rejected claims 1-3 and 7-10 on the ground of non-statutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-3 and 8-11 of U.S. Patent No. 6,863,688. In response, Applicants enclose herewith a Terminal Disclaimer to overcome U.S. Patent Nos. 6,669,730 and 6,863,688.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-3, 7-11 and 15-18 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,989,291 to Ralph et al., in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,034,254 to Cologna et al. In response, as noted above, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of claim 4 therein. Thus, claim 1 is now deemed to be unobvious over Ralph and Cologna and is otherwise allowable. Claims 2-3 and 7-10 are unobvious, *inter alia*, by virtue of their dependence from claim 1, which is unobvious for the reasons set forth above.

Applicants have also amended independent claim 11 to incorporate the limitations of claim 12 therein. Thus, claim 11 is now deemed to be unobvious over Ralph and Cologna and is otherwise allowable. Claims 15-18 are unobvious, *inter alia*, by virtue of their dependence from independent claim 11.

As noted above, independent claim 19 has been amended so that it is no longer co-extensive with the limitations found in claim 17 of prior U.S. Patent No. 6,669,730. Specifically, Applicants have amended independent claim 19 to remove certain unnecessary limitations and to note that each of the grooves "comprises a linear groove having a length extending along inwardly directed directions from a locus on a peripheral edge of said belleville washer to a locus which is radially in from said peripheral edge, wherein each said linear groove has a depth that tapers along said length and a width that tapers along said length." Thus, claim 19 now contains limitations similar to the limitations found in original claims 13 and 14 of the present application.

As it is believed that all of the rejections set forth in the Office Action have been fully met, favorable reconsideration and allowance are earnestly solicited.

If, however, for any reason the Examiner does not believe that such action can be taken at this time, it is

respectfully requested that he telephone Applicants' attorney at (908) 654-5000 in order to overcome any additional objections which he might have.

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested Amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 12-1095 therefor.

Dated: December 12, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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